

## Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9342  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY  
USMISSION BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 1601

DEPT FOR ARA LABOR ADVISOR JOHN O'GRADY

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: ELAB, ICFTU, AR, SHUM  
SUBJECT: SPECIAL ICFTU MISSION TO ARGENTINA: PART ONE

REF: USMISSION EC BRUSSELS 01355

1) SUMMARY. SPECIAL ICFTU MISSION WAS OF GREAT TRASCENDENTAL VALUE IN TERMS OF FORGING LINKS BETWEEN ARGENTINES AND DEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONAL UNION MOVEMENT. MISSION MEMBERS DEPARTED FEELING SATISFIED THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED THEIR OBJECTIVES. UNFORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, UNREALISTIC ARGENTINES EXPECTED MUCH TOO MUCH OF THE MISSION AND THE PREVAILING FEELING AMONG THE LEADERS HERE IS ONE OF DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE MISSION DID NOT PERFORM MIRACLES. GOVERNMENT REACTION APPARENTLY IS ONE OF SATISFACTION THAT "OPEN DOOR" POLICY ACHIEVED PROPAGANDA VICTORY. AFL-CIO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN MISSION BUT ONE MISSION MEMBER INFORMED ARGENTINE OFFICIALS OF AFL-CIO'S POSITION CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. AIFLD QUITELY DISPATCHED OBSERVER TO REPORT BACK ON MISSION RESULTS AS WELL AS TO DRUM

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UP SUPPORT FOR HIGHLEVEL AFL-CIO VISIT PLANNED FOR MARCH. END SUMMARY.

2) IN THREE HECTIC DAYS, FEBRUARY 22/24, THE ICFTU-ORIT MISSION CONSISTING OF KERSTEN, HEISS, MALAVE, ETACHEVERRY AND REBHAN MET SEPARATELY WITH CGT INTERVENTOR (AIR FORCE COMODORE) PORCILE, LABOR MINISTER LIENDO, PRESIDENT VIDELA, AND KERSTEN HAD PRIVATE

SESSION WITH JUNTA MEMBER ADM. MASSERA. THE DELEGATION HAD FORMAL AND INFORMAL SESSIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF A BROAD CROSS SECTION OF THE ARGENTINE LABOR MOVEMENT --FROM INTERVENED AND NONINTERVENED UNIONS ALIKE-- AND THERE WAS ALSO A DRAMATIC MEETING BETWEEN ETCHEVERRY AND REBMAN WITH FORMER 62 ORGANIZATIONS LEADER LORENZO MIGUEL IN THE MAGDALENA PRISON ARRANGED BY COURTESY OF PRESIDENT VIDELA AND THE ARGENTINE ARMY.

3) VIDELA GAVE THE DELEGATION A PRESENTATION OF THE REASONS FOR THE MILITARY TAKE OVER LAST YEAR AND THE REGIME'S PHILOSOPHY, STRESSING THE ARMY'S DESIRE (NOT NECESSARILY THE JUNTA'S) TO RETURN THE COUNTRY TO DEMOCRATIC NORMS AS QUICKLY AS FEASIBLE. WITH REGARD TO THE NORMALIZATION OF TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES, VIDELA ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS WAY BEHIND SCHEDULE IN ISSUING A NEW TRADE UNION LAW BECAUSE OF WELL-KNOWN DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES. A FIVE TO SIX MONTHS' TIMEFRAME WAS DISCUSSED, BUT THERE APPEARED TO BE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE VERSION GIVEN US BY ETCHEVERRY AND THAT REPORTED BY KERSTEN IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE. ETCHEVERRY'S VERSION WAS THAT VIDELA PROMISED THE NEW LAW WOULD BE ISSUED WITHIN SIX MONTHS. KERSTEN STATED TO THE PRESS THAT, ON THE BASIS OF A QUESTION WHICH HE POSED TO VIDELA AS TO WHETHER NORMALIZATION WOULD TAKE PLACE WITHIN A FIVE TO SIX MONTH PERIOD, VIDELA RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY. BOTH AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT IMPLICIT IN VIDELA'S RESPONSE WAS THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE WAS STILL ROOM AND TIME FOR MODIFICATIONS WHICH WOULD BRING THE LAW IN LINE WITH ILO NORMS. KERSTEN ASKED TO SEE THE DRAFT LAW WHEN IT WAS READY IN ORDER FOR THE ICFTU TO GIVE GOA THE BENEFIT OF ITS VIEWS -- A PROCEDURE WHICH WAS FOLLOWED SUCCESSFULLY IN GREECE. ALTHOUGH VIDELA INITIALLY REACTED

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NEGATIVELY, HE APPARENTLY AGREED TO THIS PROCEDURE. AS FOR THE RECENTLY PASSED LAW DEROGATING WORK CONTRACTS, VIDELA STATED THIS WAS DESPERATELY NECESSARY TO BRING ABOUT ECONOMIC REVIVAL, BUT ONCE THE TRADE UNION SITUATION WAS NORMALIZED SUCH EMERGENCY LEGISLATION SHOULD AND WOULD BE REVISED AGAIN TO ASSURE ITS CONFORMITY WITH ILO DICTATES. THE DELEGATION ALSO HANDED VIDELA A LIST OF TRADE UNION DETAINEES -- ETCHEVERRY SAYS THERE WERE 403 ALTHOUGH WE ONLY COUNT 200-ODD NAMES ON THE DOCUMENTS WE HAVE. VIDELA PROMISED TO INVESTIGATE AND REPORT BACK TO ICFTU (VIA AMBASSADOR MARTINEZ IN GENEVA) ON THE STATUS AND DISPOSITION OF EACH CASE. THOSE AGAINST WHOM THERE WERE NO JUDICIAL CHARGES OUT-STANDING WOULD BE RELEASED, ACCORDING TO VIDELA. HOWEVER, THE SIX TRADE UNIONISTS INCLUDED AMONG THE 36 POLITICAL FIGURES PRO-PROSCRIBED UNDER THE ACT OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY WERE A SPECIAL CASE. THE 36 (INCLUDING MRS. PERON) WERE VIEWED AS BEARING POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STATE OF CHAOS EXISTING IN THE COUNTRY AT THE TIME THE MILITARY TOOK OVER. VIDELA REPORTEDLY STATED THAT THERE WAS NO REPEAT NO EVIDENCE OF FINANCIAL MIS-MANAGEMENT OR

CORRUPTION AGAINST THESE PEOPLE, BUT THEIR DETENTION AND/OR BANISHMENT WAS NECESSARY FOR SYMBOLIC REASONS. NEVERTHELESS THE SIX TRADE UNIONISTS (MIGUEL, HERRERAS, ETCETERA) WOULD BE STUDIED SEPARATELY FROM THE OTHER EX-GOVERNMENT FIGURES. VIDELA ALSO SAID THAT THE ARMY UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PERONIST MOVEMENT, WITH ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS, WAS NOT INVOLVED IN SUBVERSION. (REBMAN, HOWEVER, WAS UNHAPPY WITH VIDELA'S INCLUSION OF INTELLECTUAL DISSENSION IN HIS BROAD DEFINITION OF SUBVERSION).

4) KERSTEN WAS ALSO FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY MASSERA, WHOM HE APTLY DESCRIBED AS A "PURE POLITICAL ANIMAL." MASSERA EVIDENTLY TOLD KERSTEN THAT HE, RATHER THAN VIDELA, WAS REALLY IN CHARGE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND HE PROMISED TO LOOK INTO ALL THE MATTERS RAISED BY KERSTEN. ACCORDING TO THE GERMAN EMBASSY WHICH SET UP THE MEETING, MASSERA SAID HE WOULD INSTRUCT VIDELA TO FREE THE PRISONERS, CHANGE THE LABOR LAW, ETCETERA. THIS IS ESPECIALLY IRONIC AS THE NAVY

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IS THE SOURCE OF THE PLAN TO RECOGNIZE ONLY UNION LOCALS -- A KEY PROPOSAL WHICH IS ANATHEMA TO THE PERONIST LABOR MOVEMENT. ON THIS POINT, MASSERA WAS WELL AS VIDELA EVIDENTLY ASSERTED THAT THEY WERE OPPOSED TO ANY ATOMIZATION OF THE MOVEMENT AND THAT THEY WANTED STRONG, HEALTHY UNIONS.

5) ONE MISSION MEMBER INFORMED LABOR MINISTER LIENDO AND COMODORO PORCILE OF THE AFL-CIO'S GROWING CONCERN OVER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ARGENTINA AND ITS POSITION THAT THE U.S. SHOULD SUSPEND MILITARY AID UNLESS CORRECTIVE MEASURES WERE TAKEN. AFL-CIO REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN REVIEWING ARGENTINE SITUATION TOGETHER WITH WASHINGTON INFORMATION BUREAU OF THE ARGENTINE COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (CADHU) -- WITHIN WHICH, WE NOTE, OLGA TALAMANTE IS PLAYING A LEADING ROLE. WE WOULD APPRECIATE CONFIRMATION IF THIS, IN FACT, IS AFL-CIO'S POSITION.

6) WE UNDERSTAND THAT IN LAST MINUTE DISCUSSIONS AFL-CIO INFORMED ICFTU IT WOULD ACCEPT INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN MISSION IF IT WERE HEADED FORMALLY BY ORIT INSTEAD OF ICFTU. THIS WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO ICFTU. AIFLD REGIONAL DIRECTOR CHARLES WHEELER WAS ALSO IN BUENOS AIRES DURING ICFTU VISIT BUT HE STAYED CLEAR OF THE MISSION. HIS PURPOSE WAS TO GATHER VIEWS AND DRUM UP SUPPORT AMONG LOCAL TRADE UNIONS FOR PROPOSED HIGH-LEVEL AFL-CIO SOLIDARITY MISSION IN MARCH, AS WELL AS TO REPORT BACK ON RESULTS OF ICFTU VISIT. WHEELER ALSO APPARENTLY ASKED LOCAL UNION LEADERS FOR THEIR VIEWS CONCERNING POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE TRAINING PROGRAMS IN ARGENTINA.

7) OUR COMMENTS FOLLOW IN SEPTEL.

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## Message Attributes

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